

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

NOVEMBER 2011

News and Views from the *Students and Staff*

FREE ~ ISSUE 15

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Who's that?

ROBERT LEENTJENS
Consultant

Robert comes from Holland. He's married and has two children. He is also a dog owner, so he often takes his dog for a walk near his family home after work.

Although he has a teaching degree, Robert has been working for the school as a consultant for many years. His academic background, however, gives him valuable insight when talking to students about their needs.

(See over to learn more about Robert.)

A short story

ONE NOVEMBER EVENING
by U.D. - Switzerland

The November evening was cold and dark. It was after midnight, and Jane had fallen asleep in her bed. Suddenly, she woke up, because she heard someone, coming into the house. Her heart began pounding faster than usual, and she was bathed in sweat, because the burglar was coming closer and closer to her bedroom.

Now, of all times, her husband wasn't at home: he was away on business and expected to return the next day. When the bedroom door was opened, she began to cry. Then, the light was switched on. Her husband stood in the doorway and said, 'Surprise, surprise!'

A book launch

CHEESE - SLICES OF SWISS CULTURE
on Friday, 5 Nov
from 6:30 to 8:30 pm

A new book by Sue Style with photos by Nikos Kapelis, published by Bergli Books, is being celebrated with a free Wine & Cheese event at Bider & Tanner Bookshop on Saturday, 5 November, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

In addition to a cheese market, there will also be a performance of the 'IMPROVables', members of the Zurich Comedy Club.

To ensure enough wine and cheese for all, please phone 061 373 27 77 or e-mail info@bergli.ch if you are able to join in the fun.

CELEBRATION

by June Winterflood - Canada

Recently, my mother-in-law passed away; she was 98. While looking through family photo albums, a few close family and friends, my husband and I were able to recapture moments in her life and to celebrate them and her. That's one of the amazing things about photographs: they are really good at holding memories and reminding us of past joyful times. Events which celebrate milestones in our lives - like birthdays, graduation ceremonies, or weddings - are enriched by photographs, but the celebrations themselves are the important thing.

Celebrations are good for the soul or spirit or morale, especially when people come together to celebrate an achievement, like completing a course of study. That's why English Center Basel is going to offer some special celebratory events in the coming months: a Christmas Apéro for all of our students and staff, their friends and family, and when the exam results are in, a further celebration.

Life is a journey to be enjoyed and celebrated!

In my opinion

GETTING OLD:

WHAT DOES IT IMPLY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND FOR SOCIETY?

by Elisabeth Stoevesandt - Germany

Firstly, I want to tell a little story: By chance, two old friends meet after years. One of them starts to cross the road to embrace the other one, but that man is obviously in a hurry, and he shouts: "I don't have time; I'm retired!"

This story is an example of the best sort of getting old. These older people enjoy their lives, because they fill their time in an excellent way: with their friends and grandchildren, with hobbies and sports, with travelling and culture, and - last but not least - with unpaid work. Moreover, many of them don't get serious maladies, because they are so happy. For society, these people are very useful: they stimulate the economy, they look after helpless people and they give their children free time while caring for their grandchildren.

Unfortunately, there are other old people who lose their health more and more and need the help of others. They suffer from living and from being dependent. Additionally, it is expensive to nurse them, because they need to stay in hospital or old people's homes for a long time. As life expectancy is rising, the number of old people in our society is expanding. This may be one of the reasons why the rate of health insurance mounts every year.

However, there are old people with health problems who are able to enjoy their lives and to do some of the activities described above. They can be a guide, for they show how to manage with handicaps. Therefore, they are valuable to society in an ethical way.

I often admire old people, because I think getting old is the most bitter task in one's life.

Why not write an article for WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Possible topics for DECEMBER

- Explain why you like your favourite holiday or celebration
- Besides 'good health', what is most important to you?
- The World's population will be 7 billion soon: does it matter?
- Who or what has had the most positive influence on your life in 2011?
- Write a portrait of a city worth visiting
- Review a book, a song, a film, a painting, a play, or some other artistic work
- Tell a story from your childhood
- What do you think will happen in 2012?

DEADLINE for your writing:

21 Nov 2011

Please e-mail the editor:

JUNE_WINTERFLOOD@YAHOO.COM



LISBON: A CITY WORTH VISITING

by Laura Almeida - Switzerland & Portugal

Going on holiday in late summer or in the beginning of autumn does have a certain kind of cachet, one of the reasons that made it obvious for me to book my city trip to Lisbon - my second home. The idea of leaving day-to-day life far behind and plunging into another culture and lifestyle had captured me, and so the decision of how I would spend this year's last week of holiday was made.

Now, my exhilarating stay in Lisbon is over. What remains are beautiful memories of all kinds of things that characterize the city: the smell of the sea, the charm of the capital of Portugal, the Mediterranean food, the sparkling nightlife, the warm climate that I'm missing so much here in Switzerland due to the already arriving cold season.

If you're already thinking about where to go for a city trip on your next holiday, let me give you a brief insight into Lisbon, some facts and figures and points of interest:

Lisbon is the so-called city of the seven hills since all the different quarters of the capital are situated around steep little streets and all lead to different observation points from which you are able to enjoy a spectacular view of the city and its agglomeration and, depending on where you're standing, at a completely different angle every time. You can get there by the typical, squeaking old trams which are highly appreciated by tourists.

The Greater Lisbon area counts about 3,000,000 inhabitants, which corresponds to a quarter of the whole population of Portugal. The city centre itself has approximately 500,000 city dwellers over a surface of 85 square kilometres.

If we look back at Lisbon's history, there are some happenings worth mentioning, too. In 1755 there was a tremendous earthquake, and the city had to be rebuilt almost entirely. At the very end of the city, there's a statue in memory of Margrave Pombal, who was responsible for the rebuilding. The statue stands on an avenue which goes from there, straight to the sea and harbour of Lisbon, and Pombal, himself, looks in that direction, as if to symbolize glory over destruction. Again, in 1988, Lisbon had to overcome the consequences of disaster: a huge fire attacked a whole quarter, including a church that today is a highly visited sight due to its history. Another remarkable historical fact is that Lisbon has been the most important point of departure when sailors set off to explore the unknown, far away. More recently, Portugal's capital was awarded the "Cultural Capital of Europe" in 1995, and the "EXPO 98" taking place in Lisbon in 1998 brought some new directions and advantages for the city.

Although there are some serious concerns in the current economic situation of the country, it must be said that Portugal possesses a lot of resources, be they in tourism, agriculture, handcraft, gastronomy with its fresh fish and Mediterranean cooking, the climate, the landscape, etc.

A recommendation when visiting Lisbon is to spend an evening at a traditional location where Fado - the typical Portuguese music - is performed and to get into the mood of the melodic guitar sounds, accompanied by the voice of a famous Fado singer and by a glass of good old port wine.

I hope that I have given you enough stimulating insights to have already asked yourselves, "why not go to Lisbon on our next holiday?"

What's on at English Center Basel

Remember to sign up at reception or telephone 061 269 41 41 to reserve your place at any of the following events:

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Refer to the calendar on our website or pick up a copy at reception

WHAT'S HAPPENING? MEETING

Tuesday, 22 Nov - from 12:00 to 13:00

SPEAKING PRACTICE APÉRO

Thursday, 10 Nov - from 17:00 to 19:00

Friday, 2 Dec - from 17:00 to 19:00

CHRISTMAS APÉRO

Friday, 16 Dec - from 17:00 to 19:00

Flexible Group Courses

Our weekly group courses are available in three semesters:

January-March, May-July, and September-November.

You can join them at any time and come to as many lessons as you like.

General English - Advanced + Thursday 19:00-20:30

Business English - Upper Intermediate + Tuesday 07:15-08:45

General English - Upper Intermediate + Timing to be confirmed*

*please contact the school if you'd like to go on our waiting list.

Please ask your consultant or e-mail info@englishcenterbasel.ch

VANCOUVER:

KNOCKED OUT BY HOOLIGANS AND STRAIGHTENED UP BY CITIZENS

by Herbert Knutti - Switzerland

A weekend in Switzerland: groups of fans against each other or against the police. The news shows pictures of young, hooded men throwing fireworks at young, hooded men throwing fireworks... mindless, useless, senseless, and never-ending. Discussions about hooliganism. Interviews with experts. The clubs should..., the police should..., politicians should.... We're sitting in the commuter trains, reading "the few minutes" papers, shaking our heads a little.

A change of scene: Vancouver on June 15th, 2011. People are keen to win the Stanley Cup. Vancouver might win the Cup for the first time in forty years. Whatever the function and salary level you have, you're wearing a Vancouver Canucks shirt. The Canucks have won three times; the Boston Bruins, three times. And this evening, at 5 p.m., game number seven, the last and deciding game, is on. If you want to see the game at a public viewing place or in a pub with a TV, you stop work at 12:00, and you stand in the cue at one. Everyone wants to see the game. The city stops working, the city stops breathing. Today, they will win; you will see, they will. The city is the Canucks.

At last, the game starts. And the Canucks play miserably, really miserably. No chance, no goal, no cup. Waiting another forty years.

With friends, I went to a revolving lookout restaurant after the game. The evening sky with an awesome dusk was like in a photo album. After a while, we saw a fire on Granville Street, then a second. A few minutes later, we heard a police siren, and a fire fighters' siren. 130 meters above ground, we saw the increasing chain of fires through the streets. It was a surrealistic contrast: below, around the lookout tower; the riots, burning cars and violent hooligans destroying store windows. At the top, where we were, there was a fantastic evening sunset ambience. As if this were not enough, a huge white full moon started its night journey. Amazing!

What a crazy situation and such strange feelings!

The destruction was massive. Hundreds of store windows were broken. Looters had stolen goods. The worst: the city's soul was hurt. A city was knocked out. Vancouver, the most beautiful city in the world, with clean streets; well organized, close-cropped lawns; friendly, pleasant, respectful people; where the Olympic winter games with thousands and thousands of spectators had had no problems. Imagine: Vancouverites say "Thank you" to the bus driver when they leave the bus. Always! And now? The dream of a perfect world destroyed in one night.

But in that same night, an army of citizens started to clean the streets and to help the shop owners. Police cars were completely covered by post-it messages: "Thank you boys, you did a great job!" Messages and discussions spread out through social networks. Over the next few days, citizens wrote poems, messages of good-will and mourning on the boarded up store windows: "Keep believing, Vancouver!" or "What a shame, I don't understand?" or "Come on Van, you can do better!" or "Hey, it was just a game. Just a damned game!" or "Vancouver, I love you!" On Sunday, June 19th, the people went on a pilgrimage to the downtown, passing the boards and reading the messages. Although there were many, many people, it was silent like in a museum or in a church. You felt the sadness; you felt the search for explanations and you felt the silent comeback of a city. At the end of that afternoon, I began to love Vancouver.



And next weekend in Switzerland? Don't forget your post-it pad.

English Center Basel is on facebook

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